



From the mouths of babes by FallingStar95

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Summary: Holly Wheeler was one of the only people on earth who could manage to be devastatingly cute for one moment and then devastating her older sister's relationship in the next. Written for Jancy Fanfic Week on Tumblr (Day 3: "Comedy")

From the mouths of babes

Ever since he'd started dating Nancy, the majority of the Wheeler family had immediately taken a shine to Jonathan's increased presence in their home. Although Mike found it a little strange that his best friend's brother was dating his older sister, he'd always known Jonathan was a good guy. Anyone who risked their life for their brother like Jonathan did for Will was pretty okay, in his book. And even though he and his sister fought like most siblings tended to do, he'd be lying if he said he wasn't happy to see Nancy smiling more in the past two months than she had for almost the entirety of last year.

The other two Wheeler women liked him, as well. Karen, having known Joyce since their own school days, was always happy to see their children together. True, she hadn't expected someone like her daughter to end up romantically involved with someone like Jonathan Byers, but he was kind and helpful and more than happy to give Nancy, Mike, and Will rides whenever they had need of it. And truth be told, she'd always found Steve slightly too obnoxious for her tastes.

Holly, on the other hand, absolutely *adored* Jonathan. Unlike Steve, who had never stopped to stay at their house for very long, Jonathan was frequently around, driving Will to and from party meetings and spending more time with Nancy at the house rather than going to parties or fancy dates, like she and Steve had done. And since he had become a semi-permanent fixture in the Wheeler household, she had found someone she could *always* guilt into playing with her. And he did so happily and typically with great enthusiasm!

Ted Wheeler, however... that was another story.

To be fair, Ted hadn't exactly liked Steve either. He just didn't take kindly to boys getting too close to his daughter, in general. Like Karen, Ted had found Steve very loud and... a bit too pretty. And although Jonathan was practically the polar opposite of the Harrington boy, he hadn't done anything yet to convince him that he was much worthier of his daughter than any other punk high school kid who wanted to date Nancy.

Therefore, Jonathan was always slightly more nervous than usual in his presence on the nights when Karen invited him to stay for dinner. Of course, he accepted and tried to make convincing small talk and complimented Karen on each extraordinary meal she prepared, but most nights, he spent the majority of the time focusing on Nancy's calming presence beside him so that he could tolerate Mr. Wheeler's stony gaze.

So he was more than surprised when Nancy's father actually decided to talk to him one February evening. He quickly looked up from his casserole and fidgeted his hands at his sides when Ted asked him if he had toured any college campuses yet.

"Uh, well, I've been to IU once or twice. On school field trips, mostly... to see the museums and some shows at the Auditorium and stuff," he replied, gulping back the lump in his throat. Ted Wheeler was a proud Hoosier, so he knew he would have to choose his next words very carefully.

Karen smiled. "It's a beautiful campus!" she exclaimed. "We took Nancy to look around there a few months ago when we visited some of Ted's old friends from the business school."

Jonathan nodded his head in forced agreement. "It's lovely," he said, trying not to look too uncomfortable. "I was able to get some great shots of the mall a few years ago."

Ted let out a sound halfway between a grunt and a snort; either way, it sounded pretty condescending. Nancy shot her father a warning look and reached out to take her boyfriend's hand under the table. Jonathan gave her fingers a gentle squeeze, slightly reassuring her that it didn't bother him. People had made fun of his love for photography many times before, but he had made peace with it; he wasn't going to let it change who he was. However, he would admit, it *did* feel a little more personal coming from the father of the girl he was pretty sure he loved.

"Looked into any scholarships? Athletics?" Ted pressed him. "If need be, I could get you in contact with some people at Kelley."

Of course... The Business School.

Jonathan cleared his throat awkwardly before answering. "I appreciate that, Mr. Wheeler, but I'm not really all that interested in IU," he replied.

"What *are* you interested in doing then?"

He chanced a glance over at Nancy, who squeezed his hand and took it upon herself to answer. "Jonathan wants to go to NYU," she explained. "It's always been his dream to go there."

Karen's eyes widened. "My, that's quite a distance," she noted, "And I imagine it's quite expensive to live up there!"

Ted nodded, still staring his daughter's boyfriend down. "What exactly does NYU have that IU doesn't?"

Jonathan took a deep breath to steady himself, grasping Nancy's hand a little tighter before responding. "Tisch School of the Arts."

There was a long pause. Nancy smiled encouragingly at Jonathan before turning to her parents, silently daring any member of her family to discredit her boyfriend's life goals and invoke her wrath. Mike had no problem with Jonathan's plans, but he had no intention of breaking the awkward silence, so he took a long drink from his glass to fill the time.

Until finally, a small voice spoke up. "I like art too!"

Everyone's heads turned towards Holly Wheeler, who was grinning at Jonathan from across the table. "Arts and crafts time is my favorite part of school," she explained, nodding her head seriously. "Ms. Newberry says that art is important because it makes people happy. And it *does* make me happy!"

Jonathan couldn't help but grin back at the little girl. "Yeah? That's great, Holly," he replied with a genuine smile.

Nancy felt her chest growing warmer as she observed the precious interaction taking place. "I liked art class, too, Holls," she added. "And even though I'm not a very good artist now, but it still makes me happy to see people who are. Looking at Jonathan's pictures makes me *very* happy. And his brother's drawings, too!"

Jonathan watched as she turned back to her father, narrowing her eyes in quiet defiance. "I guess we all just have our different strengths... don't we, dad?" she prompted, silently daring him to disagree with her and upset his younger daughter, who was eyeing her father just as intensely.

After seeing Holly's expectant look, Ted Wheeler sighed. "Yes, I suppose so, yes," he muttered quietly, obviously displeased but momentarily defeated by the circumstances.

Karen quickly leapt to diffuse the tension. "Well, we wish you the best of luck with your applications, Jonathan," she said, a little too brightly to be natural.

Jonathan offered her a grateful nod before shoveling another forkful of his meal into his mouth, in hopes that the conversation would take a different turn if he was too busy chewing to answer anyone. And when Holly continued to ramble on about her art class, he was incredibly relieved.

That is, until she turned her gaze back towards him and Nancy. "Jonathan, can you teach me about art when you and Nancy get married?"

Both Jonathan and Nancy nearly choked on their dinner, and Mike had to throw his arm over his face to keep himself from snorting milk across the room.

Nancy let out a nervous laugh at her little sister's request. "I'm sure Jonathan would love to show you how to use a camera, Holly," she stammered. "But we're not getting married anytime soon."

Jonathan nodded vigorously in agreement with his girlfriend, but he greatly wished he either had the power to become invisible or to somehow deflect Ted Wheeler's glare with his mind. Eleven had superpowers, why couldn't he?!

"But I see you do lots of things that married people do," Holly argued. "Hug, kiss, do things together, tell jokes..." she rambled off, counting each activity on her finger as she went. And before Nancy could steer the conversation elsewhere, her little sister delivered the killing blow.

"Oh, and you sleep in the same bed sometimes like mommy and daddy do!"

All eyes flew to the couple, who were currently sinking into their seats and turning a bright shade of red. Jonathan opened and closed his mouth a few times, unable to look away from Ted Wheeler's face, which was slowly but surely turning a deep purple color as he put off breathing. It was like looking at a car accident: too horrible to witness and yet impossible to ignore.

Finally, the older man's lips moved. "Jonathan, I think it's about time you left for tonight."

"Yes, sir!" he replied, a little too quickly, standing up from the table and making a beeline towards the hall closet where his coat was hung up.

Nancy turned to her parents, both of whom wore expressions of shock, although Ted's had quite a bit more of an angry undertone. The teenager glared at her siblings, who looked respectively confused and amused by the sudden change of pace, before turning back to the table's other two occupants. "We take *naps*," she bit out. "Nothing more."

With that, she stood up and followed her boyfriend out into the hallway, only to find him pulling on his jacket, hat, and scarf. However, upon seeing her, his face turned crimson again, and he quickly fashioned the scarf around his neck like a noose, holding the long end out to Nancy invitingly. "Just end it, Nance. Right now."

Even under the current circumstances, she couldn't help but giggle at his dry humor. "No," she refused. "I don't think so."

Jonathan seemed to consider her answer for a moment. "You're right, hanging doesn't sound pleasant," he supposed. "But you're good with a gun. Just make it quick!" he pleaded, forming her hand into a finger pistol and pressing it to his forehead.

She clapped her other hand over her mouth to keep herself from laughing loud enough for the rest of her family to hear back in the dining room. However, her efforts were in vain, as she was soon

interrupted by her mother entering the hallway, her arms crossed over her chest. "I'm not going to say I'm condoning this..." she sighed, raising one hand to pinch the bridge of her nose. "But your father will get over it eventually."

Jonathan gulped. "I'm very sorry, Mrs. Wheeler," he apologized, fiddling nervously with a loose thread on his jacket pocket. "It won't happen again."

But to their great surprise, they noticed the corner of her lip twitch amusedly. "Just... if you're going to *nap*," she spoke, her tone dripping with sarcasm. "For the love of God, just be *safe*. And make sure *Holly's* not around!"

Nancy knew her mother was aware of the fact that she was on birth control and had been sufficiently educated about safe sex... but she still hadn't been expecting such a blasé reaction from Karen Wheeler. Regardless, both of them nodded sheepishly, focusing intensely on the polished hard wood floor in an effort to hide their faces. Nancy even went as far as to palm her hand over her eyes.

Karen rolled her eyes and uncrossed her arms with an exasperated sigh. "Okay, I'm glad we're understood here... Now please just get the hell out of my house before I change my mind."

The two teens were only too happy to oblige.